The Challenges of Being a Catholic School with Non-Catholic Students, Teachers, and (Gasp) Principals

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What Makes a School Catholic?

• A Story
• Evangelization, NOT Proselytization
  – Proselytization = forced or coerced conversion
  – Evangelization = information and freedom of choice

• The Catholic School, Congregation on Education, March 19, 1977
• Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium (USCCB, 2005)
What It Means to Be a Catholic School

• Catholic schools “serve humanity until it reaches its fullness in Christ.”

• Evangelization = mission of the Catholic school
  – “proclaim the good news of salvation to all, generate new creatures in Christ through Baptism, and train them to live knowingly as children of God.”

• Schools are “privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole” person

• Centers to develop, consider and convey “a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history”
Being a Catholic School

• "the simultaneous development of man's psychological and moral consciousness “

• “need to ensure the presence of a Christian mentality”

• Use Christian thought to develop a sound criterion of judgment of behavior, concepts, and values

• Form students of strong character, capable of living healthy, wholesome, and holy lives and making a positive contribution to society.

• Dialogue with culture
Human Formation

• Through a living encounter with cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs
  – Art, Music, Rituals, Traditions
  – Values, Beliefs, Attitudes, Behaviors
• Consider absolute values in a life-context; insert them into a life-framework.
• Schools
  – help young people relate study to real-life situations;
  – stimulate the use of intelligence
  – Identify the meaning of experiences and their truths
Each Member of the School Community . . .

• adopts a common vision, a common outlook on life,
• with differing degrees of awareness,
• based on adherence to a scale of values in which he believes.
Purpose of Schools

• Education
  – the development of people into “fully integrated” human beings

• Key Principle
  – educational program intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person

• “The school is an institution where young people gradually learn to open themselves up to life as it is, and to create in themselves a definite attitude to life as it should be.”

• “Communities whose values are communicated through the interpersonal and sincere relationships of its members and through both individual and corporative adherence to the outlook on life that permeates the school.”
Catholic Culture of the School

• Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise
  – Renews life; shapes thoughts, actions, and will
• Committed to the development of the whole person
• Cultivates human values
• Worldview: Redeemed by Christ
  – Shapes understanding of culture and formation of the individual
  – Focus on virtues and virtuous living
• Understanding in the light of the Gospel
Integration of Faith and Knowledge

• Knowledge valued
• No particular Catholic method or methodology
• Wrong to consider subjects as adjuncts to faith or apologetics.
• Education helps pupils assimilate
  – Skills
  – Knowledge
  – Intellectual methods
  – Moral and social attitudes
• Develop personality and active member of community
• Aim is acquisition of values and the discovery of truth
Role of Teacher

• Guides the pupil; deepens faith, enriches knowledge through faith
• Forms the mind, heart and personality of students
• “In the measure in which subjects are taught by someone who knowingly and without restraint seeks the truth, they are to that extent Christian.” (41)
• Help pupils discover Truth.
  – “A teacher who is full of Christian wisdom, well prepared in his own subject, does more than convey the sense of what he is teaching to his pupils. Over and above what he says, he guides his pupils beyond his mere words to the heart of total Truth.”
Role of Teacher

• Helps pupils grasp, appreciate, and assimilate universal values

• “Catholic school depends . . . on the people who work there. The extent to which the Christian message is transmitted through education depends to a very great extent on the teachers.”

• Teachers are to integrate their own faith and life, and give witness to this by word and deed.
  – “This is what makes the difference between a school whose education is permeated by the Christian spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other.”
The Fundamental Aim of Teaching

• Assimilation of objective values, and a personal integration of faith and life, a life-long process
• “The Catholic school has as its specific duty the complete Christian formation of its pupils.”
• They are to be taught to
  – share their lives with God
  – overcome individualism
  – discover specific vocation in service to others
  – discern the Creator in all creation
  – be a living witness to God's love for others as part of the Church
Notable Quotes

• “Baptism by itself does not make a Christian - living and acting in conformity with the Gospel is necessary”

• “The Catholic school tries to create within its walls a climate in which the pupil's faith will gradually mature and enable him to assume the responsibility placed on him by Baptism.”

• Pride of place is provided to the gradual formation of conscience in fundamental, permanent virtues
Notable Quotes

• Christ is the teaching-center of the Catholic school;, the Model on Whom the Christian shapes his life.

• The task of the Christian school is to form Christian men and women and by so doing, be a witness to the World

• Through the systematic formation of the pupils' critical faculties the school teaches self control and uses media wisely through the use of critical and personal analysis
Challenges

55. The Catholic school loses its purpose without constant reference to the Gospel and a frequent encounter with Christ.

• How to maintain “an atmosphere permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and love“?
• How to promote opportunities where pupils experience dignity as a person before knowing definition?
Specific Issues

• How does percentage of non-Catholic students affect Catholicity of Schools?
• How to enlist the participation of parents?
• Non-Catholic Teachers in the Catholic School
• Prayer and Liturgy with Non-Catholic students and families
• Religion classes with Non-Catholics